

December 12, 2012

Dear Vermont Elementary Education Community:

This letter will serve as an update and as a reminder about present legislation, report results from the 2012 *School Health Profile Survey*, and requirements for health education.

According to the Vermont School Quality Standards [2120.8.9](#) schools are responsible for providing a comprehensive health curriculum for all students in accordance with sections 16 VSA §§ [131](#), [906](#) (b) (3) and [909](#). Additionally, the School Quality Standards 2120.8.2 state that all professional staff shall be licensed and appropriately endorsed and shall have had adequate academic preparation and training to teach or provide services in the area to which they are assigned. In grades K-6 an elementary educator's license allows them to teach health education within their class as part of the overall educational experience. In this case, the elementary educator is responsible for assessing health knowledge and skills, even if they occasionally partner with other experts from in or outside the school community to support instruction. If K-6 health education is provided on a regular basis by someone other than the elementary classroom teacher, that person must hold a K-6 health education endorsement to assess health knowledge and skills.

The goal of health education is for students to become health literate which is defined as the capacity of an individual to obtain, interpret, and understand basic health information and services and the competence to use such information and services in ways which are health-enhancing<sup>i</sup>. The focus is on providing students opportunities to practice skills defined in the *Vermont Health Grade Expectations*<sup>ii</sup> while infusing knowledge/content they need in order to perform the skill.

According to one of the *Turnaround Principles for School Improvement*<sup>iii</sup>, to improve academic achievement, it is imperative teachers and leaders establish a school environment that improves school safety and discipline, and that addresses other non-academic factors that impact student achievement, such as students' social, emotional and health needs. This requires establishing school-wide policies and procedures to maintain this environment and developing comprehensive health education programs led by qualified teachers to support the student learning needed to make decisions that lead to optimal health which in turn will support their academic growth.



For educators who are seeking an endorsement in health education, the Vermont Higher Education Collaborative (VTHEC) provides graduate level course work to help fulfill the necessary competencies. For information about the programs offered through VTHEC visit [www.vthec.org](http://www.vthec.org). The Vermont Department of Education also provides professional development opportunities which support those seeking the health education endorsement and those who are already licensed health educators. *The Health Education Series* is a program that consists of four workshops which helps meet the practicum requirements for health education endorsement or provides professional development for those already certified to teach health education. For more information on this series go to <http://tinyurl.com/fy13training>. The *Vermont Community of Health Educators* (VCHE) is a dynamic network which provides professional development and personal support for health educators. Click [here](#) for more information about VCHE or visit [http://education.vermont.gov/html/pgm\\_health\\_ed.html](http://education.vermont.gov/html/pgm_health_ed.html).

If the hope is that Vermont students have opportunities to become productive members of society, then one of the responsibilities of Vermont schools is to ensure that they have the knowledge and skills to make healthy choices, so that these opportunities are open for them.

If one of the goals of education in Vermont is to provide opportunities for students to be academically successful and become productive members of society, then it is also our responsibility to ensure that these students have the knowledge and skills to make healthy choices so that they have the potential to become these productive members of society.

Donna McAllister, Health Education Consultant is available to answer questions and assist your district on curriculum development and assessment. She can be reached at [donna.mcallister@state.vt.us](mailto:donna.mcallister@state.vt.us) or 802-828-1636.



Armando Vilaseca, Commissioner  
Vermont Department of Education

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<sup>i</sup> National Health Education Standards: Achieving Excellence 2<sup>nd</sup> edition; 2007

<sup>ii</sup> [Health Education Grade Expectations for Vermont's Framework of Standards and Learning Opportunities](#); 2007, Vermont Department of Education

<sup>iii</sup> United States Department of Education ESEA Flexibility; 2011

